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AUTHOR Holliday, Sharon; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Home economics and social studies teachers' perceptions of their ability and use of the reading process were compared. Data were gathered through a reading survey instrument given to 82 home economics teachers who later participated in workshops on integrating the reading process into the curriculum. The same instrument was mailed to 100 randomly selected social studies teachers, with 81 responses. A Likert-type scale measured use of and ability to use 27 principles and practices related to the reading process. Personal information about teachers and classes was also collected. Findings indicated that social studies teachers had higher amounts of instruction in reading. Social studies teachers spent more time reading in class, and their students spent more time outside class reading. A t-test showed that social studies teachers' usage was greater in three of four areas. Significant differences existed between the teachers' mean scores relating to ability in the four areas of reading. In all cases, the social studies teachers' perceived ability was greater. Recommendations were implementation of a content area reading course requirement for preservice home economics teachers and inservice education on the reading process. Research recommendations concerned classroom observation and assessment of use of the reading process by other content areas. (YLB)

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HOME ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL STUDIES

TEACHERS' USE OF THE READING PROCESS

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Sharon Holliday

Julie M. Johnson
Associate Professor

Melinda Holcombe
Assistant Professor

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Department of Consumer Science & Education
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE 68583-0801

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Content reading differs from general reading in that content reading is done in conjunction with content teaching while reading instruction is usually thought of as instruction given in a special reading class or an elementary classroom.

In the 1960's, money was spent for reading instruction for programs which were separate from the regular school curriculum. In other words students were "pulled out" of their regular classes and put "somewhere else" in the school where they were taught to find the "main ideas" and used worksheets to help them read. Because of these separate reading classes, rarely was attention given to coordinating that instruction with what was being read by students in their subject areas. Therefore, when these students went back into the classroom they failed. Asking content teachers to be teachers of reading does not mean for them to be less of a teacher. It encourages them to include reading skills in their classroom so students will have higher degrees of comprehension.

This project compared home economics teachers perceptions of their ability and usage of the reading process in their classroom to social studies teachers.

It was proposed that if home economics teachers knew how they compared to teachers in another content area it may help them to change the reading methods they used. Reading difficulties are a tremendous problem in Social Studies for those whose reading level is low because so much social studies content is print material. O'Connor has gone so far as to suggest that

reading skills ought to be considered the basic social studies skill since reading is so much a part of social studies. Because of the importance of reading in social studies, the researchers felt that social studies teachers would be a good comparison group to provide baseline data for home economics. Data were gathered through a reading survey instrument given to home economics teachers prior to their participation in workshops which held throughout the state of Nebraska in the fall of 1988. These workshops were entitled "Integrating the Reading Process into the Home Economics Curriculum". The same survey instrument was mailed to 100 randomly selected social studies teachers and analyses were made to see if there were any differences between the two groups. The questionnaire used a Likert-type scale to measure the respondents' perceived usage of and ability to use 27 principles and practices related to the reading process.

ON MY FIRST TRANSPARENCY ARE 4 SAMPLES OF THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS in the four areas of reading:

For each type of question, Scale A, on the left, measured the teachers' perceived usage of 27 principles and practices related to the reading process. Scale B, on the right, measured the teachers' perceived ability or comfort with these same 27 principles and practices.

1. One question relating to their usage and ability in the area of preparation for reading was: Do you prepare your students for a reading assignment by discussing what they will be reading? On Scale A (frequency of use) they responded-never,

sometimes, always. On scale B (comfort with strategies) they responded-I don't know what this is, cannot do it, some ability and can do it very well.

2. A question relating to reading and postreading was: Do you ask questions that require critical thinking skills?

3. A question relating to sensitivity to the readability of materials was: Do you investigate the reading level of your students?

4. A question relating to outside reading: Do you encourage your students to do leisure-time reading and related outside reading?

Also, personal information about the teachers and classes were included in the questionnaire. I-tests were used to determine whether or not significant differences existed between the two groups on both scales.

As we examined the personal characteristics used for the study, we found that more than 86% of social studies teachers showed study beyond a bachelor's degree, and more than 40% held graduate degrees. Slightly more than 50% of the home economics teachers had graduate degrees. Having a higher level of education may be a reason for some of the differences between the two groups.

The largest percentage of the social studies teacher (43.2%) had taught sixteen or more years. Social studies teachers seemed to have taught longer than home economics teachers although both content areas were the same when comparing the teachers who had

taught 11-15 years.

It appeared that more social studies teachers had a higher number of total students, but about a fourth of them only taught 1-2 classes.

When looking at the amount of instruction the teachers had in reading, social studies teachers were higher than home economics teachers. The largest group of social studies teachers (30.9%) in this study indicated they had taken a specific college course for credit on reading. More than 66.8% of the respondents had taken workshops offered by colleges or universities, had taken workshops offered by ESU's and were given inservice training on reading by their school.

Home economics teachers reported less instruction in reading. Consideration may need to be given to placing more emphasis on increasing inservice education for home economics teachers in the area of reading.

THE NEXT TRANSPARENCY illustrates the reading process model, which is a three level guide that helps students make connections which aid in comprehension which was also included in the instrument.

Previous studies have shown that many teachers still follow the old method of pre-reading as shown in Figure 1. It may be heard as students rush out the door - "read the next chapter". Maybe some students will, some won't or some can't. In Figure 1, much time is spent at the next class time clearing up what was not read or understood by the students.

In the second model, Figure 2, the textbook is used by the teacher to implement the reading process. In the first part of this model the teacher 1) aids the students in organizing what they already know, 2) provides relevant background knowledge if it isn't present, and 3) relates that experience to the new material to be learned. More emphasis is shown in pre-reading or preparation/motivation stage.

In the pre-reading stage the teacher helps activate schema through strategies which motivate and prepare students to better understand what they are reading. Because students have had some investment in the pre-reading stage, during the reading stage students will clarify and think about what they are learning, preferably by oral reading or guided, silent reading. Postreading activity then reinforces what has been read or learned.

This next table illustrates the models used by the teachers.

1. Twenty-seven point two percent (27.2%) of the social studies teachers spend time using the process described in Diagram II which place major emphasis on the pre-reading phrase of the reading. Data that I report later show an inconsistency, since it indicates social studies teachers are doing better at the reading process, however this data indicates they are still using Diagram I. Home economics teachers were similar in their use of Diagram II as compared to social studies teachers (29.3%).

2. Social studies teachers spend a greater amount of time per week in class reading than do home economics teachers.

Thirty-three percent social studies teachers reported 61-120 minutes were spent in class reading. Social studies teachers also have their students spend more time outside of class reading than do home economics teachers.

A t-test was used to determine whether or not significant difference existed between the social studies teachers' and home economics teachers' mean scores relating to usage in the four areas of reading (Scale A).

A significant difference was found in three of the four areas of reading. It appears that the social studies teachers usage is greater in these three areas. No significant difference was found in the area of Reading and Postreading. This was the only area of reading usage that home economics teachers appear to have a greater usage than social studies teachers. Home economics teachers appear to model reading in their classes, use creative activities and a variety of materials to a greater degree than social studies teachers.

The last transparency displays the information related to whether or not significant differences existed between the social studies teachers' and home economics teachers' mean scores relating to ability in the four areas of reading (Scale B). A significant difference was found in all four areas of reading. In all cases the social studies teachers perceived ability was greater. It appears social studies teachers may be more able to prepare students for reading. Social studies teachers also

emphasize reading in and out of their classes to a greater amount than do home economics teachers.

What kinds of recommendations could be made based on the findings?

1. Teacher-education programs in colleges and universities may want to consider implementing a content area reading course requirement for preservice home economics teachers, or incorporate the teaching of the reading process in existing required home economics education courses. It appears that social studies teachers have greater perceived usage and perceived ability in the area of the reading process.

2. Teacher educators need to continue to provide inservice and graduate education on the reading process to give home economics teachers greater skills in this area.

3. Administrators could use this study to show that social studies teachers are more effective at incorporating the reading process. Social studies teachers may be a possible resource for or collaborator with the home economics teacher in their school.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research has been done by Wyatt that indicates home economics teachers who participated in inservice education were able to improve significantly their ability and usage of the reading process.

1. Using the data from this study, researchers could observe social studies teachers and home economics teachers in

their classrooms to see if they are actually using the reading process as their questionnaires stated.

2. Using this same questionnaire, since it is not subject-matter specific, one could assess the usage of the reading process by other content areas, such as science, English, math, vocational education areas, etc.

Helping students learn to read and understand is basic to all subject matter areas. Continued research and instruction is needed to assist in strengthening home economics program.

Table 1

Characteristics of Social Studies and Home Economics Teachers and Classes

Characteristics	S.S. N=81	S.S. %	H.E. N=82	H.E. %
Highest Level of Education				
B.S.	10	12.4	15	18.3
B.S. + 15 or more credits	27	33.3	44	53.7
M.S.	17	21.0	9	11.0
M.S. + 15 or more credits	25	30.9	13	15.9
Ed.D. or Ph.D.	1	1.2	1	1.2
No response	1	1.2	0	0.0
Years Taught				
1 to 5 years	12	14.8	11	13.4
6 to 10 years	15	18.5	27	13.9
11 to 15 years	18	22.2	18	22.0
16 or more years	35	43.2	26	31.7
No response	1	1.2	0	0.0
Number of Classes taught				
1 class	12	14.8	2	2.4
2 classes	10	12.3	2	2.4
3 classes	9	11.1	11	13.4
4 classes	6	7.4	14	17.1
5 classes	25	30.9	27	32.9
6 classes	14	17.3	19	23.2
7 classes	2	2.5	7	8.5
8 classes	2	2.5	0	0.0
No response	1	1.2	0	0.0
Number of Students				
1-20	9	11.1	9	11.8
21-40	9	11.1	20	26.3
41-60	7	8.6	13	17.1
61-80	10	12.3	9	11.8
81-100	10	12.3	10	13.2
101-120	21	25.9	4	5.3
121-140	9	11.1	4	5.3
141 or more	5	6.2	7	9.2
No response	1	1.2	0	0.0

S.S.= social studies teachers H.E.= home economics teachers

Table 3

Amount of Instruction in Reading

	S.S.		H.E.	
	Yes	%	Yes	%
I have taken a specific college course(s) for credit on reading	25	30.9	11	13.4
I have taken workshop(s) offered by colleges or universities	19	23.5	10	12.2
I have taken workshops offered by ESU's	16	19.8	12	14.6
My school has given me inservice training on reading	19	23.5	9	11.0
I have read extensively in profession journals about reading	22	27.2	9	11.0
Other	6	7.4	16	19.5

S.S.=social studies teachers H.E.=home economics teachers

Table 4

Reading diagrams and time spent by social studies and home economics teachers

	S.S N=81	%	H.E. N=82	%
Diagram which best reflects what is done with reading in your classroom				
Diagram I	52	64.2	54	65.9
Diagram II	22	27.2	24	29.3
No response	7	8.6	4	4.9
Time spent in class reading				
0 - 30 minutes	17	21.0	27	32.9
31 - 60 minutes	24	29.6	37	45.1
61 - 120 minutes	27	33.3	14	17.1
121 - 180 minutes	9	11.1	4	4.9
No response	4	5.0	0	0.0
Time spent outside class reading				
0 - 30 minutes	19	23.4	31	37.8
31 - 60 minutes	12	14.8	20	24.4
61 - 120 minutes	22	27.2	24	29.3
121 - 180 minutes	22	27.2	6	7.3
No response	6	7.4	1	1.2

S.S.=social studies teachers H.E.= home economics teachers

Table 5

T-test between mean usage scores (Scale A) of social studies teachers and home economics teachers

Areas of Reading	Mean	S.D.	T-Value	df
Usage of Prereading				
Social Studies	2.25	.268	-4.41*	160
Home Economics	2.07	.246		
Usage of Reading and Postreading				
Social Studies	2.27	.299	-1.05*	160
Home Economics	2.22	.259		
Usage of Sensitivity to the Readability of Materials				
Social Studies	1.85	.391	-4.58*	160
Home Economics	1.59	.342		
Usage of Outside Reading				
Social Studies	2.19	.355	-2.31*	158
Home Economics	2.06	.336		

Note. There were 81 usable questionnaires from each group for Usage of Prereading, Usage of Reading and Post-Reading, and Usage of Sensitivity to the Readability of Materials. There were 80 usable questionnaires for Usage of Outside Reading.

*$p < .05$

Table 6

T-test between mean ability scores (Scale B) of social studies teachers and home economics teachers

Areas of Reading	Mean	S.D.	T-Value	df
Ability to Use Prereading				
Social Studies	2.42	.367	-5.51 *	158
Home Economics	2.12	.311		
Ability to Use Reading and Postreading				
Social Studies	2.43	.383	-2.95 *	157
Home Economics	2.27	.286		
Ability to be Sensitive to the Readability of Materials				
Social Studies	1.83	.520	-4.28 *	157
Home Economics	1.51	.431		
Ability to use Outside Reading				
Social Studies	2.50	.529	-3.81 *	151
Home Economics	2.19	.460		

Note. There were 79 usable questionnaires for social studies teachers and 80 usable questionnaires for home economics teachers for Ability to Use Prereading, Ability to Use Reading and Post-Reading, and Ability to be Sensitive to the Readability of Materials. There were 76 usable questionnaires for social studies teachers and 77 usable questionnaires for home economics teachers for the Ability to Use Outside Reading.

*$p < .05$

SAMPLES OF THE 4 TYPES OF QUESTIONS

	Scale A (frequency of use)			Scale B (comfort with strategies)			
	Never	Sometimes	Always	I don't know what this is	Cannot do it	Some ability	Can do it very well
PREPARATION FOR READING							
Do you prepare your students for a reading assignment by discussing what they will be reading?	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
READING AND POST-READING							
Do you ask questions that require critical thinking skills?	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
SENSITIVITY TO THE READABILITY OF MATERIALS							
Do you investigate the reading level of your students?	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
OUTSIDE READING							
Do you encourage your students to do leisure time reading and related outside reading?	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

Figure 1.*

READING PROCESS MODEL: OLD STYLE

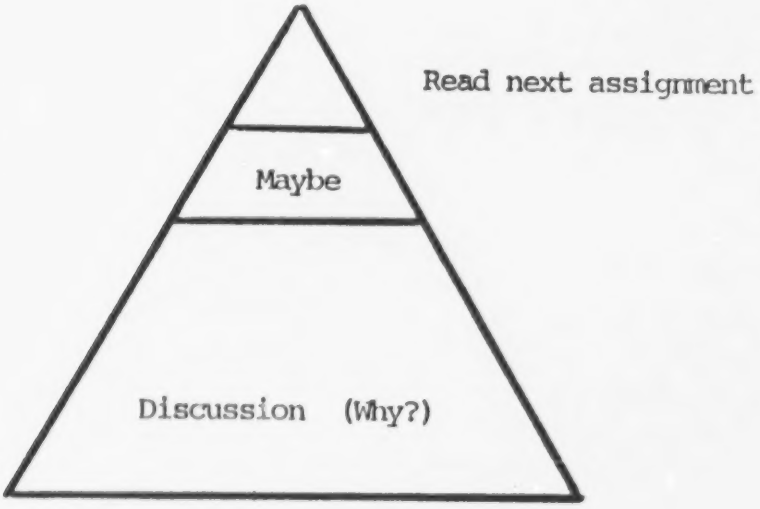
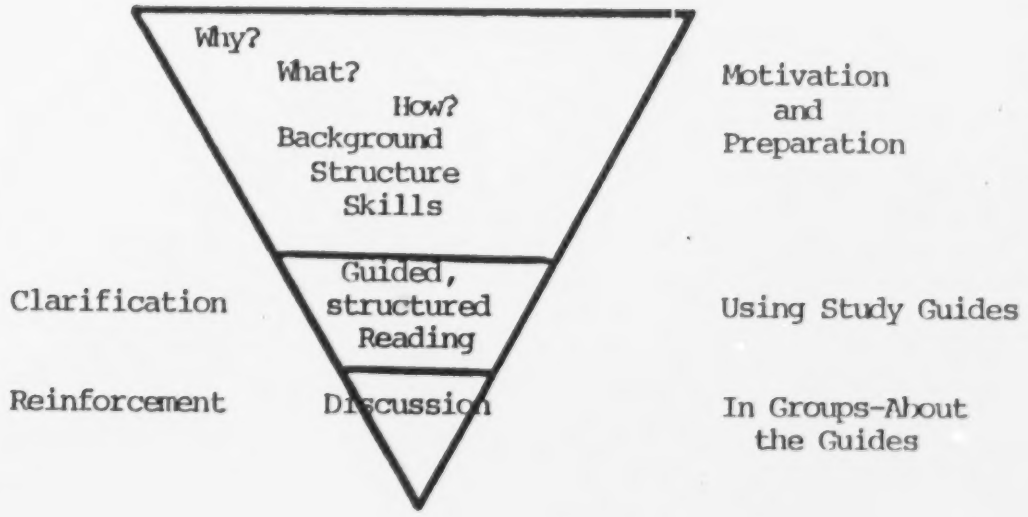


Figure 2.*

READING PROCESS MODEL: NEW STYLE



* Early, M., 1980.